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ABSTRACT

The International School of Brussels (Belgium) developed a program of Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA) to increase support for "at risk" multicultural, multilingual, and multinational students. The at-risk population included three groups: those who passed standardized English as a Foreign Language tests but were not literate enough for regular classes; those with learning problems not identified in previous language or culture; and those who experienced temporary learning disabilities because of a discrepancy between what they brought to the school program and what the school program asked of them. The CBA philosophy was chosen because it supported emphasis on local needs and a school-appropriate standard of performance for students. regardless of culture, language, or nationality. A screening test was developed to identify enabling skills, and remedial instruction was provided if necessary. At the end of the school year, participating staff and students were satisfied with the project because more students were served, instruction seemed more effective, ownership of positive behavior change increased, and the additional emphasis of skills across curriculum helped to develop a team approach to serving students. (10 references) (JDD)

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DEVELOPING COLLABORATIVELY AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SPECIAL NEEDS PLAN FOR MULTICULTURAL, MULTILINGUAL, AND MULTINATIONAL SECONDARY STUDENTS

By Patricia L. Jonietz

ABSTRACT: All students in international schools can have special needs, and staff at ISB wanted to increase support for 'at risk' students. The existing system offered EFL/ESL students classes preparing for entry into regular classes, and Learning Disabled/Mentally Retarded/Emotionally Disturbed/Physically Handicapped students small group or individualized instruction to support regular classes. Another population of 'at risk' students included those who passed standardized EFL tests but were not literate enough for regular classes, those with learning problems not identified in previous language or culture, and those who experienced temporary learning disabilities because of a discrepancy between what they brought to the school programme and what the school programme asked of them. In adapting Curriculum-Based Assessment to an international school, staff reviewed: curriculum offerings, examinations and activities, enabling objectives/minimum competency skills, and multi-national approaches to special needs. The CBA philosophy supported emphasis on local needs and a school-appropriate standard of performance for students regardless of culture, language, or nationality.

INTRODUCTION:

The International School of Brussels is a private, non-sectarian, non-profit, day school with English language of instruction that offers to graduates a local diploma and the International Baccalaureate. In the '86 to '88 school years, there

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were approximately 400 students enrolled each year in grades 10 to 12, and about 50% of these were non-American. Like other international schools, approximately, 95% of the yearly graduates continued on to higher education (Belcher 1989). Over the course of a school year, about 1/8 of the the high school students enrolled in the EFL programme with standardized entry and exit exams, and 1/8 of the high school students participated in the Special Education Resource programme which included group or individualized instruction for Learning Disabled, Mentally Handicapped, Emotionally Disturbed, and Physically Handicapped students.

The international school student population demonstrates the distinctions between national schools and international schools. International schools are not monocultural, monolingual, or mononational (by birth or choice). Nor are international schools only multicultural or only multilingual or only multinational. They are all of those things. International schools waste no time worrying about student or teacher primary enculturation, maternal language, or nationality. The schools accept that those are permanently unique, personal, and important to all. (Meakin 1987) International schools are concerned with the acculturation of all national groups to the school language of instruction because that skill facilitates survival and success within the international school. International schools expect multicultural, multilingual, and multinational student enrollment which falls into three groups: underdeveloped, developing, and developed speakers of the school's language of instruction. The schools offer programmes for: EFL/ESL (underdeveloped speakers), remedial (developing speakers), and regular classes

with high achieving options (developed speakers). (ECIS 1987)

IDENTIFICATION OF NEED:

In 1986, some ISB high school staff were unhappy with the existing special services offerings because there seemed to be an identifiable group of students who needed help but were not being served. We had found a group of students who could be identified as 'different' from the majority and needing special help. Once this group of 'at-risk' students had been identified, the rest of the school population could be considered as 'normal' for the school. The educational problems of these multicultural, multilingual, and multinational students seemed to arise as a result of their disabilities, personal limitations, or because of an imbalance between what the students brought to the school situation and what the school had to offer. (Ainscow and Florek 1989) We theorized that special help could be provided if we expanded the existing student services delivery options to include these 'at-risk' students.

For an international staff representing many enculturation models, maternal languages, and national education backgrounds, clarifying the vocabulary for our school-based project assumed importance. (Damen 1987) The following definitions were developed:

> At risk meant students who may fail to accumulate required credit, fail to pass elective and non-elective examinations, and thus fail to graduate.

Collaboration utilized all of the school resources to assist the total development of all students.

Special needs could be experienced by any student at any time, and arose when there was a discrepancy between student experience and school demands. A special needs programme should supply support for staff, students, and parents.

One special need in international schools is the spiral down effect in the curriculum of the academic demands of the International Baccalaureate diploma examinations which require not only subject content mastery but also effective oral and written language skills. (IBO 1989)

Our 'at -risk' population included three groups: Trans-Language Learners (TLL), Temporary Learning Disabled students (TLD), and potential learning disabled students from the international community (ILD). Trans Language Learners are non-native speakers of the school language of instruction who reach the minimum fluency level in English but are not yet skilled enough for successful participation in academic activities. This is usually evident in a vocabulary or writing skill deficit. Some TLL students feel comfortable with literal reading and writing tasks but lack fluency and coherence in analytical and interpretative reading and writing tasks. Their coherence is related to developing ideas, and their fluency is related to linking ideas. Problems in these areas may not be evident in the student's maternal language but are identifiable in the school's instructional language. (Jonietz 1990) A Temporary Learning Disability may arise in any student because of study in a new culture, a new language, or a new multinational environment. International LD students are those who could, in an American model education programme, be identified and assessed as learning disabled but were not

identified or assessed in their previous non-American education programme. Their identification and assessment will be complicated by the use of standardized assessment instruments which are usually culturally, linguistically, and nationally biased and therefore, not 'appropriate' for multicultural, multilingual, and multinational students.

PLAN FOR INFORMATION GATHERING:

This was a collaborative project across departments and grade levels supported by the school superintendent, the high school headmaster, the high school counselors, and area department heads. Our fact finding began with school documents: the school accreditation self-study, the course descriptions, the International Baccalaureate examination package, the primary and middle school resource/EFL programme descriptions, and profiles of the current year's 'problem' students. We wanted to identify what we actually required of students, when certain skills were needed, and who and why some students were causing problems for themselves or the staff. Initially, we scheduled regular feedback to an administrative team of counselors, headmaster, and English area head. After completing information gathering, this team developed a policy statement containing the general aims and ethos of the new programme, the roles and responsibilities for planning, the assessment procedures, the plans for record keeping, and staff development areas. Throughout the process, we sought opinions and comments from staff members through informal discussion, interviews, and questionnaires.

Our conclusions from the information gathering were clear:

1. Success in ISB internal and external exams depended on mastery of subject content and written English: spelling, grammar, usage, vocabulary, and composition techniques.

2. The existing EFL exam needed to be replaced with one more relevant to school skills necessary for success.

3. The EFL class content needed to be more relevant to success across the regular class programme.

4. Because the Resource programme would be expanded to reach more students., we needed to develop a screening device for new entry students to identify mastery of identified skills necessary for success <u>across the ISB curriculum.</u> Below-average performance on this test should mark students for immediate further investigation.

5. We should see the results of any programme change in improvement of student academics, self-esteem, and social relationships.

<u>CURRICULUM-BASED ASSESSMENT:</u>

The innovative part of our plan was the adaption of Curriculum-Based Assessment to the international school. (Idol et al 1986) We choose CBA because it stressed local needs and eliminated any implied or inferred criticism of a previous school or a previous country. It announced to everyone that we believed education had to be appropriate for the <u>local</u> programme. In our collective experience, no previous school was wrong in what it required, but it was probably different from what ISB required. In Japan, reading and thinking but not speaking and writing in English may be important, and the reverse may be true at a school in Rome. In Los Angeles, classes other than college preparatory may be available, and only college preparatory classes or the International Baccalaureate may

be offered in a school in Norway. In Bangladesh, the manner in which students performed in 8th or 9th grade may have required certain skills, and more sophisticated skills be required by the school in London. In France, flexibility in course assignment may not be possible because of a highly structured educational system, but individualized planning may be the basis of special services and instruction in India.

CBA allowed us to set standards appropriate for ISB. We said that to succeed on our playing field everyone had to play by these rules. We identified the rules, explained them, and taught them when necessary. Because we knew that the previous playing field and the previous game probably had different rules, we expected the transition from one playing field to another to be made by some with ease, by some with difficulty, and by some with greater difficulty.

THE ISB CURRICULUM-BASED ASSESSMENT PLAN:

We set about implementing curriculum-based planning by posing and answering a series of questions.

> What do we offer in the curriculum?
> Our archive search identified the courses, teaching methods, class activities, and internal and external examinations in the ISB curriculum.
>
> What do we ask students to do or achieve in our curriculum?
> The archive search as well as the informal discussions with teachers identified the class content, school activities, and internal and external examination style and content. Within the International Baccalaureate curriculum, there is a re-

quirement for a community or social service activity (CASS) and a personal research paper which placed added importance on extracurricular activities and arts-based classes as well as on library skills and materials.

What do we assume students know?
We discovered that across the curriculum we expected students to be able to: read English textbooks at 9th grade level, write paragraphs and compositions in English, spell in English, use English grammar, and take notes.

How will we gather this type of information about new students?
We needed a method for finding out which entering students did not have the enabling skill levels we expected. Nationally normed standardized tests were not appropriate for multicultural, multilingual, and multinational students, and they would not identify locally important skills and needs. We needed to develop a school-based screening test which asked new students to read from school instructional material, write from current curricula topics, and use grammar rules from the school chosen grammar handbook.

How will we cope with the gaps between what students know on entry to the school and what they must know and practice to succeed at the school?
Our plan was to divide our existing EFL classes into ability levels. Level A met three of a possible eight periods a day , and A level students were enrolled in EFL general science and world history. Level B met two of a possible eight periods a day, and, though still decided on an individual basis, regular class options broadened and usually included arts, maths, and sciences, but the B level student could be enrolled in a second year of EFL science and history. Level C met one period a day, and the student was also enrolled in a regular English class. Resource students were only those we could identify/assess in the traditional categories of special education. For students not assigned to Resource or EFL but who still needed help, we devised a remedial class, the English Skills Clinic. (FIGURE 1)

During the first year of the English Skills Clinic, we decided to emphasize the participation of the English, history, EFL, and business studies teachers who

demonstrated by active participation and ownership of the programme that they accepted collaboration as an effective method of improving curriculum offerings and meeting student needs. We thought our programme changes would also develop in staff and students personal ownership of self-improvement. The administrative changes required revision of rather than addition of class options and staffing.

ALL-SCHOOL SCREENING PLAN:

The core of the CBA analysis depended on a screening test written by school staff and related to school skills and activities. Essentially, we wanted to create a test based on the identified enabling skills, and we expected most entering students to score well. Entering students took the EFL test or the English Skills test. Students who passed the EFL test then took the English Skills test. The test scale was Superior, Above Average, High Average, Average, Low Average, Below Average, and Deficit. We set the percentage scores for each group at each administration, but after five administrations the numerical scale displayed no significant statistical fluctuation. Students scoring in the Superior range received a commendation letter to suggest that they consider the Honors option of English 10/11. A score of Below-Average or Deficit immediately called for further investigation and support activities. (FIGURE 2.) Further investigation work required from the staff consultation time, flexibility, observational skills , and suggestions for different approaches. (Heron and Harris 1987)

If possible, further investigatory work began with a review of the student transcript/permanent school record, but a system of school transcripts might not exist in the previous country or the records might not be in English. We sought standardized testing if available in previous school or country. Assuming the parents both spoke English or that the English speaking parent was in the country when we called, a parental conference was the most helpful activity. It gave us information about the total family transition, other children, and the student's previous education and future plans. Twice in one school year, we found students with probable mental retardation, but that label was so socially negative in the family's culture that the parents had spent years trying to cover it up, and the students had suffered untold humiliation and pressure when they were without the ability to achieve the goals set by previous schools. We also looked for a recommendation from previous or current teachers or counselors identifying problems or suggesting special help. During the first year, we found attached to the school application a letter from a previous headmistress which, when translated, indicated that the student had attempted suicide because of an inability to cope with school and family pressure. Finally, we always held a student conference because we knew that no matter how sincere our efforts, if the student did not want to receive or accept help, it was a waste of our time to insist upon offering it.

REMEDIAL CLASS - ENGLISH SKILLS CLINIC:

The implementation of the English Skills Clinic, a short-term remediation class, has the most relevance to a national school curriculum. For one term, each student had a regular credit class meeting five periods a week. Enrollment priority

was given to 10th grade non-native speakers of English and 11th grade non-native speakers of English who were first year IB diploma candidates. Class enrollment was approximately 12 a term, and we assumed that within the class small groups with similar needs related to skill level or class assignment would develop. The class teacher was a resource across the school curriculum. and worked with individual students, worked with groups, and facilitated collaborative teaching.

During the first week of term, all enrolled students took a set of standardized tests and a school-made study skills survey. These standardized tests were only for diagnostic information and test-taking practice in English since they were culturally inappropriate for most students. The remedial teacher and student held a goal setting conference to design an individual plan for remediation, and they signed a contract for this plan. Review of progress was every three weeks or four times a term.

During the first term, remedial class emphasized regular history and English class activities and requirements. Generally, all students spent two periods a week using history and English class assignments to practice specific remedial skills related to the gathering of content material (reading, note taking, key words, and outline strategies). One period a week was spent on improving the generation of ideas for composition writing activities using regular class assignments in English and history. Two periods a week were devoted to other assigned class work in science, math, and languages. Because of the rotation, the teacher could sched-

ule time with each student each week individually or in a small group. The students also began to schedule time for conferences with teachers, library study, and computer word processing. The Skills Class teacher modeled appropriate study techniques, learning style practices, and techniques for applying drill and practice theory. Peer tutoring, positive attitude, and affective behavior influences were encouraged in the group. Collaboration with classroom teachers required their active involvement in student improvement. The first term, collaboration included eleven of twenty-six staff members.

To exit from the remedial programme, the student had to earn a 'C+' in regular English ('C' or 74-76% being the average score). Real life for secondary school students is earning good marks. High marks are respected by other students, teachers, and parents. Earning high or improved marks seems to improve the class teacher's opinion of the student and also to improve the student's personal feeling of self-worth. Our long-term goal was to ensure that all students earned improved class marks because they understood and practiced the identified ISB levels and methods for reading, writing, and reasoning in English. We developed short-term goals related to marks for the four quarters. First quarter, we wanted students to have immediate success and show improvement in one regular class with that teacher's cooperation. By the end of the term, we wanted students to see the results of using the new study skills in improved term marks. The remedial teacher checked with the classroom teacher to estimate whether the English/history term examinations could raise or lower the term mark, and the student chose to concentrate end-of-term study in either history or English. Third

quarter, we emphasized long term planning skills. We asked the students to estimate their class average in English/history (again the remedial teacher consulted with the classroom teacher). We asked the students to prioritize their classes and choose to concentrate work in the subject they liked or in the subject in which they needed the most help or effort. They had to assume responsibility for choosing an area of concentration to improve their term average. Because of the information we had uncovered related to first term examinations, we could also choose to work on improving examination performance.

CONCLUSION:

At the end of the year, participating staff and students were satisfied with the project because more students were served, instruction seemed more effective, ownership of positive behavior change increased, and the additional emphasis of skills across curriculum helped to develop a team to serve students. Our changes required no additional funds or staff and gave us more effective management of resources. For staff members and students, this process of consultation and negotiation provided a responsive and flexible system approach.

International schools may offer a new definition of special needs and a new laboratory for programming with multicultural, multilingual, and multinational students and teachers. In international schools, special education is the collaboration of staff across the curriculum to provide of a programme which includes academic opportunities for specially designed group/individual instruction to accom-

modate traditional special needs (to include learning disabilities and others), Temporary Learning Disabilities (to include EFL/ESL), and Trans-Language Learners.

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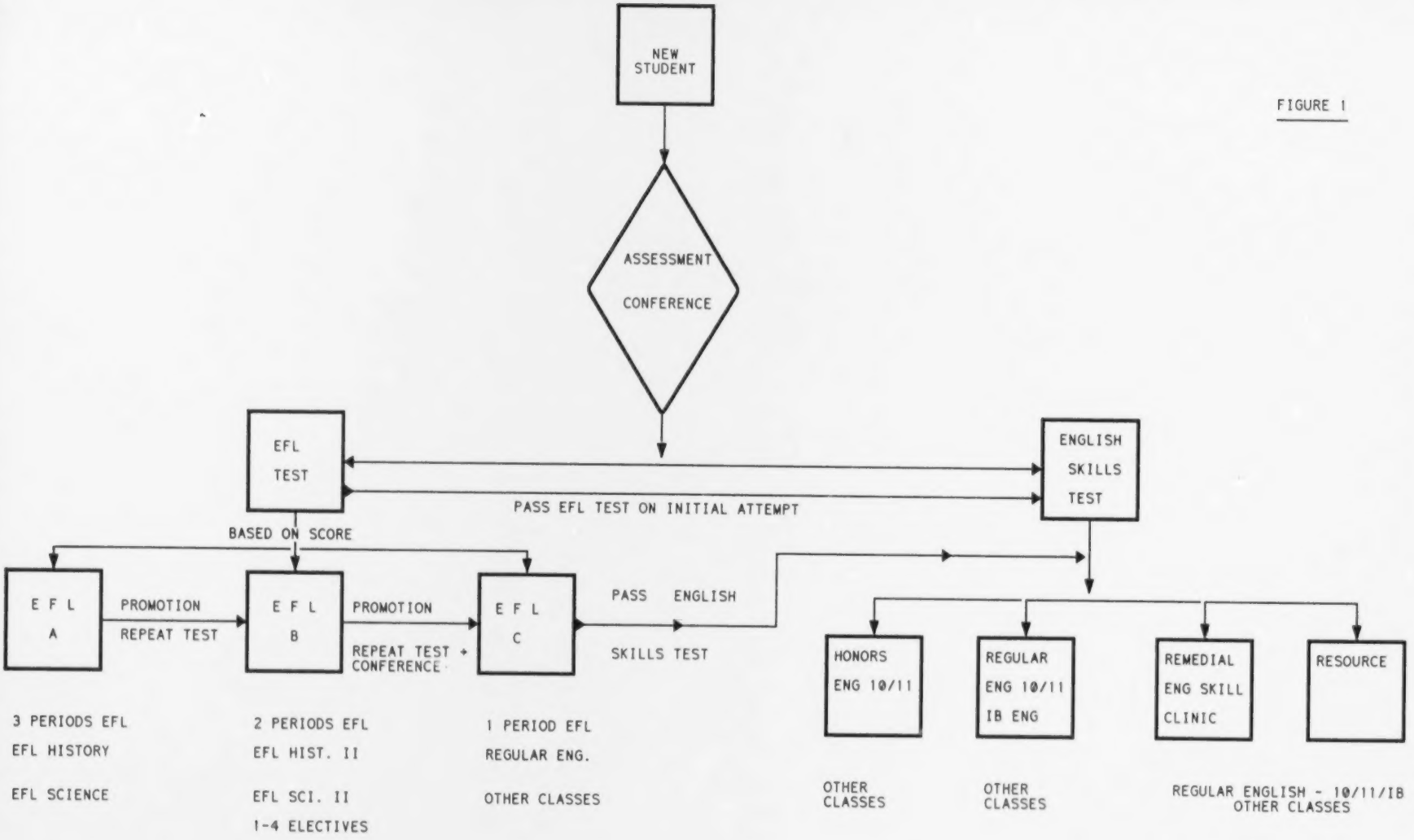
FIGURE 1


NEW STUDENT
ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE
EFL TEST
ENGLISH SKILLS TEST
PASS EFL TEST ON INITIAL ATTEMPT
BASED ON SCORE
E F L A
PROMOTION
REPEAT TEST
E F L B
PROMOTION
REPEAT TEST + CONFERENCE
E F L C
PASS ENGLISH SKILLS TEST
HONORS ENG 10/11
REGULAR ENG 10/11 IB ENG
REMEDIAL ENG SKILL CLINIC
RESOURCE
3 PERIODS EFL
EFL HISTORY
EFL SCIENCE
2 PERIODS EFL
EFL HIST. II
EFL SCI. II
1-4 ELECTIVES
1 PERIOD EFL
REGULAR ENG.
OTHER CLASSES
OTHER CLASSES
OTHER CLASSES
REGULAR ENGLISH - 10/11/IB
OTHER CLASSES

ENTRY TESTING PLAN

FIGURE 2